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SCRIPTURE, TRADITION AND INTOLERANCE: an introduction
to the critique of Sebastian Castellio (1515-1563)

Ian Haslett

More than 400 years ago Castellio wrote that "There has never been so much strife, evil and wickedness. Today the world is full of confusion, especially in religious matters." /2 What then seems to be a modern cliché has an ancient pedigree. As we shall see, Castellio's lamentation was linked to his belief in the obscurity of scripture. /3 This was to make him persona non grata in Protestant Reformation circles among which he moved. For in Reformation theology, belief in the 'claritas et sincérité scripturae' was axiomatic.

The vexatious times in which Castellio lived were part of the Reformation era (1520-1648) comprising both the Protestant and Catholic reformations. Traditionally the churches have conditioned their people to look back on this era with rosy spectacles - apart from the unfortunate matter of the schism. And indeed if one looks no further than the noble aspects of the epoch's religious physiognomy, then it is not hard to conclude that heroes, saints, scholars and prophets were thick on the ground in those days.

Yet it can also be maintained that the times constituted a shocking caricature of Christianity, or that the old perversions were substituted by new and more nasty ones. From all accounts it is accepted that in the period between 1525 and 1648, more Christians were killed, maimed or deprived by other Christians - in the name of Jesus Christ or dogmatic verities - than in any other period in the entire history of Christianity before or since. Such was the price for the struggle over the proper understanding of scripture.

In order not to get bogged down in generalities, we will confine ourselves to the question of the treatment of heretics and its theological and biblical justification. Underlying this question is the issue of toleration and intolerance. In pursuance of medieval Christian tradition, the Reformation era in its Catholic and Protestant expressions was intolerant. For intolerance was a commonly accepted dogma cutting across confessional divides. It was allegedly divinely legitimized dogma. Any doubts on the matter were seen as disrespectful of God. /4

The modern Christian view, or at least the assumption of modern Christians, is that it would be unthinkable to subject religious deviants to the civil penal code, still less make them liable to capital or corporal punishment. This way of thinking is a relatively late arrival in Christian thought; in fact it is alien to the mass of post-Constantinian Christian tradition as a whole. Further, while toleration nowadays is considered a commonplace, the principle of toleration has never in fact been formally and explicitly incorporated in any ecclesiastical corpus or confession of Christian doctrine. The inherent doctrinal intolerance of Christianity makes this a difficult thing to do. It seems hard to avoid the conclusion then that the practice of toleration as we now know it has been imposed on Christianity from outside. That is, toleration did not emerge spontaneously from within the Church. It did not develop as a fruit of faith, since for so long it was seen as incompatible with faith. And so on this fundamental question, what was unthinkable yesterday is today's *de facto* orthodoxy.

To clarify the concepts of tolerance and intolerance, which in practice are inseparable from church-state relations: both notions can operate in one of two ways, though not necessarily exclusively. These ways are either formal or substantive. Formal toleration is grounded on neutrality or indifference, at least on the part of the civil power which guarantees the toleration. Substantive toleration is based on a positive appreciation of the religious value of all or the others. Toleration as we know it today is an undefined mixture of formal and substantive toleration.

Formal intolerance is inseparable from substantive intolerance. It involves coercion to uniformity of belief and practice, - or as we see it in modern times, uniformity of unbelief. In default of conformity, civil rights are either withdrawn or diminished. Where the Church has been the undisputed mistress of society, formal substantive intolerance has prevailed.

In a typically universal religion like Christianity, tolerance and intolerance are connected to the predominance of one of two strains. These are the prophetic-biblical, and the mystical. When the prophetic-biblical tradition is dominant, then exclusive claims to absolute truth are advanced. /5 Where possible, this leads to formal and

substantive intolerance, putting the lives and property of dissidents heretics etc. in danger.

When the mystical tradition manifests itself - it can rarely be dominant - it is accompanied by impulses of substantive toleration. Mysticism's notions of learned ignorance and pious irrationalism give rise to those impulses. It tends to recognize that there are diverse ways of perceiving God, and so can wander into eclecticism.

The Church has of course experienced both sides of the threshold of secular power. On the one side, it has had to struggle for toleration - of itself, that is - as in the early Christian era, the Reformation era, and in modern times. On the other side, it has had to consider whether or not to accord toleration to others, throughout a period of about 1300 years. Almost without exception the Churches have refused toleration to Christian heretics, schismatics and dissidents, although the attitude to minorities of Jews, Moslems and pagans was surprisingly more permissive, at least in theory. In short, when the Church has been persecuted, it has advocated toleration; when it became legalized and established, it has urged intolerance of heterodox Christians.

To turn to Sebastian Castellio: 6/ He was one of the Reformation's isolated figures. In his life and work he was something of an anti-hero. He was not in any official sense a heretic, though he could hardly be characterized as orthodox. His significance lies in the fact that he took it upon himself to try and make a chink in the armour of the ancient Christian tradition of intolerance. Indeed he was one of the first Christian theologians to argue for the principle of formal and substantive toleration of Christian deviants by Church and State. The undertaking was daunting. He once noted that he felt "like a fly trying to bring down an elephant." /7

With the exception of one or two Enlightenment figures and a handful of Christian Liberals, Castellio has been largely ignored and forgotten about. This is due chiefly to prejudice. Secularist writers have found him too religious, and most Christian writers have found him not religious enough. With a combination like that, oblivion is guaranteed.

Castellio came from the Duchy of Savoy and was of mixed French and

Italian extraction. His education was at Lyons, where his studies were largely in the new subject of the day, the Classics. He did not study formal theology as such, but like all Christian Humanists he would have studied texts from the Bible and the Church Fathers. In this connection he would have come across the works of Erasmus, the doyen of Christian Humanism. Like many, though not all Christian humanists, he read and was convinced by the writings of Luther, and so opted for the Reformation cause.

During one of the intermittent anti-Reformation persecutions in France Castellio fled the country and made for Germany. He settled in Strasbourg where he joined many other French religious refugees. It is not unlikely that in Strasbourg, Castellio fell under the influence of a group of Christian free-thinkers and sceptics. Martin Bucer and the other Reformers referred to this group as "Epicureans", and denounced them as people who "really do not believe in anything at all". /8 But as it happened, Castellio was befriended by his compatriot, John Calvin, who was also working in Strasbourg at the time. When Calvin was called back to Geneva, he brought Castellio with him, intending an educational and catechetical role for him. He was put in charge of the prototype Genevan Academy. He published in this connection his "Dialogi sacri", /9 which was an introduction to the Bible with paraphrases and dialogues of scriptural stories in classical Latin, for use by pre-divinity students. The book enjoyed widespread success for over 200 years, and represents the sole enduring success of Castellio's life-work. /10 A Latin translation /11 of the Bible he did was criticized at the time on the grounds that Ciceronian style was inappropriate for the Word of God, and his French translation /12 was frowned upon since it was full of popular colloquialisms, and so improper.

In Geneva, Castellio tried unsuccessfully to enter the ministry. The chief ostensible reason for this was some important hermeneutical differences of opinion with Calvin. /13 The most notable of these was Castellio's denial of the canonicity of the Song of Songs. Calvin felt that this attitude might jeopardize the authority of the whole of Scripture as a valid witness to the holy Spirit. On another occasion Castellio complained about the defective morality and ethical hypocrisy of many of the Genevan ministers. He was eventually obliged to leave Geneva. As is often the case when someone is wanted rid of,

Calvin wrote for Castellio a glowing character reference. /14

Castellio made his way to Basle. Though the Church there was Zwinglian, the city had a relatively liberal reputation and was a famous centre of Christian humanism. Here Castellio became professor of Greek, and remained so until his death. He edited and published Greek classics. He also edited some Christian mystical writings, notably the 'Imitation of Christ' and the 'Theologia Germanica'.

A few years later, Castellio let himself be drawn into controversy with the Genevans again. This time it was over the issue of toleration. This followed the widely applauded execution in Geneva of the arch-heretic Michael Servetus. Castellio was in no way concerned with trying to defend Servetus, rather he questioned the whole practice of punishing and killing heretics. and so he wrote a book on the subject, and published it using a pseudonym, - "Concerning Heretics". /15

Before looking at Castellio's ideas on the subject, it is useful to recall how the Goliath of intolerance originated and established itself in Christianity. The chief progenitor was the Old Testament and Christian use of it. Once the Old Testament was accepted as part of the Christian canon, and once a strictly christological interpretation was imposed on it, then it was not hard to assert that Moses and Elijah were really aliases for Jesus Christ. And it is possible to trace the ebb and flow of Old Testament influence on the Church in a predictable manner until the beginning of biblical criticism. Where the Church had been persecuted, the Old Testament tends to be laid aside, except for the Genesis stories, the poetic literature, and the stories of the exiles. But where the Church has a decisive influence on the state, the Old Testament becomes more alive, consciously or unconsciously.

Firstly, the Church found ready made authority in the Old Testament for proceeding against heretics. Secondly, they found justification for ascribing religious authority - dominant or subordinate - to the state. The Magisterial Reformation for example was not slow to remind the state of its sacred duties.

As regards the extermination of heretics: once the Church was

convinced that serious doctrinal deviation was to be equated with blasphemy, idolatry, apostasy and false prophecy, then the biblical penal prescriptions were not hard to find. /16 Similarly the duties of the state as watchdog, governor, or secular arm of the Church were grounded on Old Testament kingship, particularly David, Josiah, and Hezekiah. The theocratic state then became the agent of coercive uniformity, that is, formal and substantive intolerance. So that, where there is an alliance between on the one hand Moses, the prophets, and Christ, and on the other hand the kings of Israel and the Christian state, religious totalitarianism ensued. The Old Testament was paradigmatic.

When considered by itself, the New Testament can hardly provide the justification for persecution of religious dissidents. It may well provide a basis for dogmatic and moral exclusiveness. But the worst that can happen to nonconformists is excommunication, - a spiritualization of the Deuteronomic death penalty. Christ's own methods and example, the rejection of natural force in spiritual matters, the notion of faith as voluntary, the idea of the two kingdoms, Paul's insistence on the primacy of love in dealing with those of weaker consciences, and so on, make it difficult to justify positive intolerance. Yet in this respect, the New Testament was later made to fit Old Testament preconceptions. The Old Testament was considered as fulfilling the New Testament. In Reformation times it was argued that the conditions obtaining in apostolic Christianity were abnormal. A notable representative of this way of thinking was Henry Bullinger in Zurich, a leading theoretician of the magisterial Reformation. /17 And so exegetical manipulation could make certain New Testament passages justify repression. The most notorious example of this is with regard to the parable of the wheat and the tares, /18 normally the bulwark of the tolerationists and the laxists. /19 It proved to be possible to base the execution of heretics on that too.

Taking the Patristic era as a whole, we find that it supplies later advocates of both toleration and intolerance with an arsenal of ammunition. This is explicable by the fact that in that period, the Church changes from being a persecuted Church pleading for toleration to a persecuting Church committed to the principle of intolerance. The dramatic change in the Church's political status accounts for this largely, though not only. In the earlier period we see Tertullian even

going so far as to argue for toleration on the basis of natural rights. /20

Exemplifying the transition in his own thought and person was Augustine. Everyone had heard of Augustine's conversion. Not so well-known is his conversion from the old Christian view that heretics and schismatics should be countered with argument only, to the view that they should be coerced; this was now possible, since the civil power was Christian. In common with the early Fathers, the younger Augustine had believed in the freedom of faith, and once wrote that "no man can believe unless he wants to." /21 But later on considering Luke 14,23 - "compel them to come in" - he developed the theory of what he called beneficial coercion and good persecution. /22

Thereby Augustine helped to provide the theoretical basis for the full blown intolerance of the Church in the future. To be fair, his thinking was conditioned largely by the social and political disruption caused by Donatist terrorism. The consequence was that heresy became criminalized. In Imperial Law it was equated with treason and liable to capital punishment, /23 but only in so far as it posed a threat to social stability. That limitation was clearly understood by both the Church and the legislators. No one argued that plain dogmatic deviants should be put to death. And in fact, in the old Imperial Christian era, judicial execution of heretics almost never took place. This aversion to heretic-killing testifies in part to the measure of the New Testament, - but also to the dominance of allegorical exegesis, with its Platonist thrust to spiritualization.

In the mediaeval period, the chief advance was that the execution of heretics ipso facto became the norm. The development of the single organic unit of "Christendom" with its increased approximation to Old Testament conceptions favoured this development. /24 So also did the traumas of the violent struggle with the Cathars and Albigensians. The principal theoretician of mediaeval practice was Thomas. His formulation is clear-cut: "The secular power has the right to execute heretics, even if they are no danger to others, because they are blasphemers of God in following false doctrine". /25 This meant that heresy had no longer to be accompanied by treasonous rebellion to qualify for incineration. This was also connected with Thomas' virus theory of heresy. The virus of heresy in any individual must be

quickly destroyed (that is, the individual must be corporally destroyed), lest the people succumb to an epidemic and end up en masse in Hell. Ecclesiastes 8,11 came to mind. Intolerance of proven heresy was now absolute. On this basis the various inquisitions operated.

When the Reformation came along, the question of toleration dramatically re-emerged. The early works of Luther and Zwingli seem to advocate toleration. Luther's principal theme of Christian liberty, his concept of faith as voluntary trust, his initial rejection of state competence in spiritual affairs, his appeal to (Christian) conscience, his rejection of capital punishment for heresy etc., all seemed to herald a radical break with the past. This was short-lived. To his own consternation, Luther's early theology opened up a Pandora's box of all sorts of prophets, free spirits, super-pietists, and revolutionary fanatics. The Reformers quickly back-pedalled. The toleration they had sought for themselves they now denied to others including adherents of the Old Church. The outcome - influenced by Ephesians 4, 5 - was that territorial confessional apartheid was imposed on Europe as a solution to the religious question. Within each territory then, Protestant and Catholic, formal substantive intolerance was practised in the traditional mediaeval manner.

There was a remarkable Anabaptist spiritualist writer called Sebastian Franck. His solution to the religious problem was that all churches should be abolished so that true religion should be abolished. One of his admirers was Castellio. Franck's analysis of what was happening to the Reformation movement was apposite. He wrote: 'Formerly some wrote well on the subject of Christian liberty. That was because they were in danger. But now that this liberty has become an embarrassment to them, they have put the old shoe on again and sing the old song. From Christ they return to Moses, from the sun to the shadow.' /26

And Castellio's cri-de-coeur in the quotation given at the start is also an authentic contemporary lamentation over the way the Reformation was developing. If the mediaeval Church certainly liquidated heretics, it was not very often, and they tended to be isolated individuals. But in the Reformation era, things were moving in the direction of mass killings, especially of Anabaptists, and then later of Catholics and Protestants in religious wars and battles. Castellio's attitude was typical of a strain within Christian humanism

which asserted that life has precedence over doctrine, that right behaviour is more pertinent than right thinking, that people should be judged by ethical and not dogmatic criteria. Erasmus had done much to propagate this way of thinking, even if his conscience submitted to the authority of the Roman Church. 'He will not break a bruised reed or snuff out a smouldering wick' (Is. 42,3) was a favourite text of such Christian humanists. /27 How can it be possible, they asked, that people who justify or condone division, strife, religious crime and murder have anything resembling a good theology? It has to be said that behind this way of thinking lies - dogmatically speaking - reductionist theology. Castellio and his likes found that the churches were most militant on matters on which the Bible was most obscure which meant large areas of traditional or Reformation Christian doctrine. They argued that what was 'essential' on 'matters of faith' was far too broadly conceived. Christians are battling over human opinions and are not content with the limited but sufficient divine revelation in the moral law and Christ, over which there is a unanimity. And so dogmatic totalitarianism is a travesty of Christianity.

As indicated, on the occasion of Servetus' execution there was a flurry of literary activity between the Genevans and Castellio on the question of executing heretics, though Castellio used a pseudonym. Just as Castellio's book appeared in 1554 /28, Calvin published his 'Defence of the Orthodox Faith'. This was a point by point refutation of Servetus, but his preface is a systematic and cogent apology for intolerance. /29 There is nothing especially original, still less 'Calvinist' about it. It is simply a restatement of traditional Catholic belief and practice, and includes the virus theory of Thomas. 'We must resist the temptation to be influenced by feelings of humanity in these matters', he says, 'Away with hesitant spirits who prefer Gamaliel to Nebuchadnezzar, for they will only lead us to satanic anarchy'. /30 And it was Calvin's book which received acclaim rather than Castellio's.

The onus of replying to Castellio fell to Calvin's colleague and later successor, Théodore de Bèze. /31 Castellio meanwhile composed a reply to Calvin, /32 but it was not published until the next century in Holland. He also wrote an answer to de Bèze. This was published in Geneva, but not until 1971. /33

Castellio's published book on the treatment of heretics takes the form of a florilegium or anthology of texts of theologians ancient and modern. These texts argue explicitly or implicitly against the killing of heretics. He admits that nearly all the moderns have now retracted their opinions, which they expressed when they were under the threat of persecution. Ironically, Castellio manages to scrape up a few passages from the early Calvin. This has provoked a modern commentator to remark that if Calvin ever wrote anything in favour of religious liberty, it must have been a typographical error. /34

A few quotations from Castellio should illustrate the flavour of his thinking: 'To kill someone does not mean vindicating a doctrine, it means killing a human being ... the truth of an argument is not enhanced by steel or fire.' /35 In line with his claim that the true Church is the oppressed Church, he states: 'If those who are persecuted are blessed, how can those who persecute be blessed?' /36 He attacks what he sees as a double standard in established Christianity. It represses doctrinal error by force, yet is lax on the seven deadly sins. Why is one form of alleged blasphemy so severely punished, and another form tolerated? Is not moral hypocrisy blasphemous? And he notes: 'We have whole cities full of blaspheming drunkards, and it is hard to tell if they are more addicted to drink than to blasphemy. If it is blasphemy, why are they not put to death?' /37

Castellio's basic thesis is that the divine moral law has been unambiguously revealed and is unanimously accepted. On everything else, except the existence of God and the life of Christ, there is no accord, since scripture is obscure or uncertain. Often then mere human opinions are confused with divine revelation. And so liberty of opinion is wrongfully criminalized.

The reply of Beza to points like these was not accommodating 'This is the work of a godless (sic) blasphemer ... whose mind is perverted by a diabolical and unchristian love', he affirms. /38 If God's majesty is to be honoured, monsters in human form must be killed. Freedom of speech and action is worse than dictatorship - it means disrespect for the Word of God and church order. This is the worst possible crime for which no punishment is severe enough. Cruelty? - Beza asks with genuine sincerity, - what is half an hour's burning compared to the

eternal fire of Hell? Beza's wrath is determined by the fact that he was alert enough to see that ultimately Castellio posed a threat to the basic formal principle of the Reformation, namely the authority of scripture alone: 'On what basis can the Church exist if the firmness of the word be removed by someone who would make it too obscure for settling religious controversies?' /39

Lastly, in his later years Castellio composed his final unpublished work, a more speculative affair entitled: 'On Doubt and Belief Ignorance and Knowledge'. /40 This certainly substantiates the suspicion of the Genevans that Castellio did not subscribe to the dogmatic basis of the Reformation. Some typical remarks in this work are as follows: 'The more one knows the truth, the less one wants to damn the others.' 'It is liars who strive after meticulous verbal consistency to hide their ignorance.' 'If only Christians had greater capacity for self-doubt, there would be less religious crime.' /41

Significantly, Castellio attacks implicitly Reformation hermeneutics and the dominant Augustinian anthropology. He says that the canon with which scriptural truth should be determined are not scripture itself, not the Church, not the Spirit nor any combination of these three, but morality and reason. To assert as the Reformers do, however, that reason (flesh) is incorrigibly corrupt and incapacitated means two things: 1) it disowns 'the daughter of God' /42 and 2) it compels the Churches to accord the status of divine revelation to their doctrines, and so endow them with infallible authority.

That was Sebastian Castellio. He was one of history's misfits and failures in terms of his own times. Failures usually do not make history, since history usually prefers success stories. From many points of view Castellio is open to criticism, and he was representative of what might be called Christian subterranean thought stigmatized by the various orthodoxies as simply unchristian and apostatical. Such a way of thinking could until modern times only be marginal, since by its very nature it could not seek power and authority. The temptation to read any of his writings could be reinforced by the maxim of Sebastian Franck: 'No book can be bad enough that good Christians cannot profit from it.' /43

Ian Haslett

Glasgow. October 1984

Notes

1. Or 'Châteillon'.
2. La Bible nouvellement tradlatée par Sebastion Chatellion. Basle 1555. Preface, f. *2r.
3. Ibid., f. *2v.
4. The standard work on the subject is:
J. Lecler SJ, Toleration and the Reformation. 2 vols. Translated from French original (1955) by T.L. Westow. New York, London 1960.
5. Cf. Jer.2, 9ff. Is.2. Acts 17,22-31
6. F. Buisson, Sébastien Castellion. Sa vie et son oeuvre (1515-1563). 2 vols. Paris 1892.
7. Concerning Heretics. Pseud. (Sebastion Castellio). Ed. R.H. Bainton. Records of Civilization, vol. 22. New York 1935. (Quoted: Bainton ed.).
8. See M. Lienhard, Glaube und Skepsis im 16. Jahrhundert. In: Bauer Reich und Reformation. Festschrift für G. Franz. Ed. P. Blickle. Stuttgart 1982. Esp. pp.179-181.
9. Geneva 1543
10. The book was translated into English twice in the 18th century. Cf. Buisson, op.cit.2, p.352.
11. Biblia, interprete Sebastiano Castalio. Basle 1551.
12. See note 2.
13. Cf. F.Wendek. Calvin. The Origins and Development of his Religious Thought. Translated from French original (1950) by P. Mairet. London 1965. Pp. 82-83.

14. Cf. Corpus Reformatorum, op. Calvini 11, pp. 674-676.
Cf. Buisson, op. cit. 2, p.352.
15. De Haereticis an sint Persequendi. S.1. 1554. engl. in Bainton ed., pp.121-253.
16. E.g.: Lev.24, 15-16. Num.25, 1-5. Deut.13, 2-16; 17,2-7.
1 Kings 18,21-40. Zech.13,3.
17. Cf. J.W. Baker, Henry Bullinger and the Covenant. The Other Reformed Tradition. Athens, Ohio 1980. Pp. 92-93.
18. Matt. 13,24-30; 36-43.
19. Cf. R.H. Houston, The Parable of the Tares as the proof-text for Religious Liberty to the end of the 16th Century.
Church History 1, 1932, pp.67-88.
20. Ad Scapulam, cap.22. Patrologia latina, ed. Migne, vol.1, col 699.
21. 'Credere non potest homo nisi volens'. In Joannem 26, nr.2.
Patrologia latina, ed. Migne, vol.35, col.1607.
22. Epistle 185,11. Ibid., vol.33, col.797.
23. In the year 407. Theodosian Code 16,5,40.
24. 'Ecclesia et imperium est unum et idem'. Monumenta Germanica Historica, Constitutiones et Acta 2, p.63.
25. Sentences IV, d.13, q.2, a.3, sol. Cf. Summa th.II,2, q.11, a.3.
26. Bainton ed., p.191.
27. Cf. Matt. 12, 18-20.
28. Cf. n. 15.
29. Corpus Reformatorum, op. Calvini 8, col. 461-481.

30. Ibid., cols. 471, 472-473, 474-475.
31. De haereticis a civili magistratu puniendis ... Geneva 1554.
32. Contra libellum Calvinii. 1612.
33. De haereticis ... non puniendis. Ed. R. Bekker and M. F. Valkoff. Travaux d'Humanisme et de Renaissance 118. Geneva 1971.
34. Bainton ed. p.74.
35. Ibid. p.271.
36. Ibid. p.222.
37. Ibid. p.229.
38. See Lecler, op. cit. pp.274-275.
39. Op.cit. pp.66.
40. De arte dubitandi et confitendi ignorandi et sciendi. Ed. Elisabeth Hirsch. Studies in Mediaeval and Reformation Thought 29. Leiden 1981. English extracts in Bainton ed., pp.287-305.
41. Bainton ed., p.288 ff.
42. Ibid., p.297.
43. Ibid.,p.188.

THE MEANING OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT IN MATTHEW'S GOSPEL*

David Hill

It is probably true to say that no other part of the Gospel tradition has undergone more diverse interpretation over the centuries than the Sermon on the Mount. It has been regarded as -

- a new moral law (nova lex) to be carried out literally by all Christians: or, in other words, the epitome of Christian ethics;
- an interim or emergency ethic, applicable only to the period between Jesus' ministry and the cataclysmic coming of the supernatural Kingdom of God (A. Schweitzer);
- an ethic of intention (Gesinnungsethik) providing to the Christian a general direction rather than specific directions for Christian behaviour, i.e. a compass rather than an ordnance map, a design rather than a code for life in the Kingdom;
- an absolute ethic whose purpose is to show man the futility of all his moral striving and thus cast him, in repentance, upon the gospel of God's forgiveness, i.e. the impossible ideal of Lutheran orthodoxy;
- as the prophetic, or the ideal ethic realisable in its perfection only when the Kingdom is ushered in (Richard Niebuhr).

None of these - or the many other interpretations offered of the Sermon - is devoid of at least some element of truth. It is not my task to assess them here. What I am setting out to do is to try to show how and how the author who composed or compiled the Sermon on the Mount (as we know it, especially from Matthew's Gospel) has given indications as to how he interpreted it.

*A lecture given to the Sheffield Theological Society in January 1984 as the first of three on the subject 'Understanding the Sermon on the Mount'.

I suppose I have to defend the words 'the author who composed or compiled the Sermon'. Without going into the intricacies of Synoptic criticism we can say (on the basis of observation) that over half of the 111 verses of Matthew's Sermon have parallels (be they loose or very close) in Luke's Gospel, but apart from Luke's own Sermon - a Sermon of 30 verses given to disciples on the plain after Jesus came down from the mountain - these parallels are scattered throughout our Third Gospel and may be accounted for by Matthew's and Luke's different handling of Q material, i.e. material belonging to a tradition of Jesus' words independently used by Matthew and Luke, in addition to Mark. Be that as it may, there is a basic similarity between the long Matthean Sermon and the Lucan Sermon on the Plain which, despite their many differences, urges us to argue for a Sermon nucleus, probably inherited by Q and reworked, with Q, by the two evangelists, each in his own way. What are these similarities? They are found in the following points:

- (a) general subject matter: teaching about conduct expected of disciples and/or crowds which follow;
- (b) the opening, i.e. the Beatitudes. (Luke's Woe-words are his own composition, I think; though there are scholars who claim that the Q tradition and Matthew omitted them);
- (c) content: almost all the Lucan Sermon sayings are found in the Matthean Sermon on the Mount; the eschatological dimension of Jesus' words is the same, and the teaching about love of one's neighbour (even of one's enemy) is in both;
- (d) conclusion: the parable of the house-builders which challenges the listeners to be doers;
- (e) occasion: early in Jesus' (one-year) ministry and preceding the cure of a centurion's servant;
- (f) relation to a common place: cf. Matt. 5.1 'on the mountain' and Luke 6.17, after the descent from the mountain.

These similarities suggest that the tradition has here preserved something of an extended Sermon delivered by Jesus towards the beginning of his ministry. /1

Now this nucleus-Sermon (which may have looked something like Luke 6. 20-49) has been expanded by Matthew through additional use of Q material (material which Luke has reserved mostly for his travel narrative) and by material from sources of his own. That is the justification for saying that the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew reflects the author's compilation or composition.

/ There are two points of interest to note at this stage:

- 1 Verses distinctive to the Matthean Sermon as we have it, whatever their origin, include those in Chapter 5 which deal with Jesus' teaching on the law (5.17, 19-20) and most of the antitheses section; the general teaching in Chapter 6 about almsgiving, prayer and fasting (6.1-8, 16-18); and the sayings in Chapter 7 about not giving what is holy to dogs (v.6) and the warning about false prophets (v.15). It is generally agreed that this material represents a Jewish-Christian bias or interest on Matthew's part. /2
- 2 Matthew's putting together of the contents of his long Sermon shows, by and large, a topical arrangement and this gives to his Sermon on the Mount a relatively well-constructed form. The order of the Matthean Sermon is straight forward.
 - a. Exordium: the Beatitudes and the important introductory sayings on 'salt' and 'light'.
 - b. A proposition stated at the end of the sayings on the Law, 'For I say unto you that unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees you will not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven' (5.20); this proposition controls what follows.
 - c. The righteousness of the scribes is set out and intensified in 5.21-48, the well-known antithesis section marked by 'You have heard that it has been said...., But I say unto you...'
 - d. The righteousness of the Pharisees - illustrated by the three practices of almsgiving, prayer and fasting - is described and its outward showiness criticised in 6.1-18.

- e. The righteousness of (Christian) disciples is described in a series of loosely related sayings, 6.19 - 7.27: for example, words on anxiety, on judging others, on perseverance and integrity, ending with the parable of the two householders, or, better, the two foundations.

Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, then, is a relatively well constructed block in a Gospel which, as a whole, is structured. The most structurally striking feature of our first Gospel is the presence of five major discourses of Jesus, each ending with the same kind of formula, 'and when Jesus had finished these sayings', found in 7.28, repeated in 11.1 (after the commission to the Twelve), 13.53 (after the parables of the Kingdom), 19.1 (after the discourse on life in the community of Christians) and at 26.1 (after the discourse on the Last Things). This five-fold pattern was deliberately chosen by the evangelist, but that does not imply that for him his Gospel paralleled the five books of Moses (for it doesn't). But because of the great authority of the Pentateuch five-foldness had become something of a fashion, witness the five books of the Psalms, the Megilloth (five books), 1 Enoch, the original sections that make up Pirke Aboth ('The Sayings of the Fathers') and Papias' Exposition of the Lord's Oracles, itself patterned after the five discourses in Matthew. /3 Whatever be the significance of the five-fold formula or pattern, for our purpose it is important to note that the Sermon on the Mount - the fruit of Matthew's compiling, editing and even composing - is placed first among the discourses of which it is the longest and probably also the most carefully planned.

Before we proceed, may I say that, while I imagine that Matthew believed and wanted his readers to believe that Jesus spoke all (or virtually all) the words of the Sermon (i.e. all or nearly all of those 111 verses), I do not think that the evangelist believed that Jesus spoke them all at once, in a single sermon. Matthew himself constituted the Sermon into its unitary form and quite deliberately placed it where it is in his Gospel, the first major block of Jesus' teaching. That, incidentally, is not a new or recently arrived-at view: it was held by John Calvin who, when writing on Matthew 5.1 in his Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists shows that he understood the Sermon as a representative summary of the doctrine of Christ

collected out of his many and various discourses. Calvin's comment is worth quoting:

Those who think that Christ's sermon, which is here related, is different from the sermon contained in the sixth Chapter of Luke's Gospel, rest their opinion on a very light and frivolous argument. ...It is probable that this discourse was not delivered until Christ had chosen the twelve; but in attending to the order of the time, which I saw the Spirit of God had disregarded, I did not wish to be too precise. Pious and modest readers ought to be satisfied with having a brief summary of the doctrine of Christ placed before their eyes, collected out of his many and various discourses. /4

Now let us begin to focus on factors which may help us to understand the Sermon in Matthew's purpose and theology. To whom does Matthew say the Sermon was addressed? Following a statement that great crowds followed Jesus from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem and other places - a statement which clearly recalls Mark 3.7-8 - Matthew says in 5.1,

And seeing the crowds he went up into the mountain, and when he had sat down his disciples came to him. And opening his mouth he taught(^{ἐδίδασκεν}) them saying...

It is to the disciples alone, then, that the mountain Sermon is addressed, the ascent up the mountain being a retreat from the crowds? That is the view of many (and it is crucial for their understanding of the Sermon), but it fails to take account of the statement at the end of the Sermon (7.28-9) that 'the crowds (^{ὄχλοι}) were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one having authority and not as the scribes' - a statement which recalls Mark 1.22, the first reference in that Gospel to Jesus' activity of teaching. So obviously the crowds heard the teaching and were impressed. In view of this verse and in view of Matthew's interest in the 'crowds' (^{ὄχλοι}) in general - and for him they are not hostile crowds or indifferent crowds, but fringe crowds, people on the edge with the potential for belief. /5 In view of these two points we must say that the Matthean Sermon on the Mount is presented as having been given to the disciples in the hearing of, or in the presence of the crowds, the interested who followed and who were an important objective of Jesus' ministry.

To ask 'Where was the Sermon located by Matthew?' is almost gratuitous. Of course we know that it was delivered (according to Matthew) on the mount:

Seeing the crowds he went up to the mountain, or up into the hilly country, and when he sat down (the traditional posture for the Jewish teacher) his disciples came to him...

Now before we ask what special significance for Matthew this location had, let us observe

- (i) that Luke's Sermon is given by Jesus *after* he had gone up into the mountain (*εἰς τὸ ὄρος*) stayed all night in prayer, chose the twelve disciples whom he named apostles and had come down again to stand on a level plain (*ἐπὶ τόπῳ πεδινῷ*) where he addressed his words to the disciples : and
- (ii) that in his introduction to the Sermon (from 4.23 onwards) Matthew shows indebtedness to Marcan language and the Marcan sequence. Already I have drawn attention to the dependence of 4.25 on Mark 3.7b-8. Now the account of the gathering of the crowds in those two verses from Mark 3 is immediately followed by the statement that in order to escape the crush of the multitude Jesus *ἀναβῆκε εἰς τὸ ὄρος* (Mark 3.13a), where he proceeded to summon the disciples and appoint the Twelve. Given the dependence of Matthew's account of the gathering of the crowds in 4.25 on Mark 3.7b-8 and the similarity of language between 5.1 and Mark 3.13a, it is apparent that Matthew's mountain-setting has been drawn from Mark. The context has been altered, admittedly: in Mark the mountain is a place of retreat from the crowds where Jesus appoints the Twelve: in Matthew, where the appointment of the Twelve is postponed until their commissioning in chapter 10 (cf. Mark 6.7-13), the mountain becomes the setting for an extended discourse in the presence of the gathered crowds. Putting these two observations together, it

seems clear that both Matthew and Luke bring the Sermon of Jesus into relationship with the mountain of Mark 3.13a; Matthew adopts it as the location for the Sermon, and Luke has the Sermon take place as soon as Jesus has descended from it.

Such a coincidence between Matthew and Luke is striking, and little attention has been paid to it until recently, although it may well have ramifications for Synoptic relationships. All I wish to suggest here is that the presence of τὸ ὄρος Mark 3.13 is sufficient in itself to account for the settings of the Sermons in Matthew and in Luke, and the seemingly artless way in which these evangelists deviate in their precise settings (but in nothing else) suggests that the Sermon in the Q-tradition was not supplied with any geographical setting at all.

Now what is the point of arguing that Matthew's mountain setting for the Sermon is ultimately derived from Mark 3.13? Because I wish to challenge the very common interpretation of Matthew's mountain-setting as part of a conscious attempt on the part of the evangelist to present the Sermon as the new (Christian) Torah, and Jesus as the new Moses, with the mountain being viewed as an anti-type to Sinai. This view - that Moses-Sinai typology dominates the Sermon - has had a lengthy history in New Testament study. /6 In his book The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount (a book which devotes surprisingly little attention to the Sermon's immediate setting in Matthew) W. D. Davies offered a counsel of caution by demonstrating a real ambiguity: 'Matthew seems to present Jesus as giving a messianic law on the mount, but he avoids the express concept of a New Torah and a new Sinai: he has cast around Jesus the mantle of a teacher of righteousness but avoids the express ascription to him of the honorific 'New Moses'. /7 He resolves this ambiguity by showing that wherever Moses-typology appears in Matthew, it is not dominant, but is absorbed into and transcended by a higher Son-christology. Be that as it may, the important point to be made is that Moses-Sinai typology is not the controlling feature of Matthew's Sermon. If, as I have suggested, Matthew's mountain setting for Jesus' sermon is ultimately derived from Mark 3.13, what pointers to the significance of the setting might that offer?

In the tradition contained in Mark 3.13-19 the mountain is the setting for an event of great theological importance, namely, the summoning of the twelve to form the foundation of the eschatological community. As Denis Nineham says,

Jesus now climbs a mountain - the traditional setting for a solemn divine act - and chooses from all Israel gathered together the foundation members of the eschatological community. /8

Now when we look at the immediate introduction to the Matthean Sermon (4.23ff.) we find that Matthew too has placed the address in the context of a great gathering of the people of Israel to Jesus (cf. Mark 3.7-8), crowds from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and beyond Jordan: and we also find that Jesus' ministry of teaching, preaching and healing - three terms which are found together only in Matthew 4.23 and 9.35 - suggests also (cf. 11.2-6) the presence of the age of fulfilment. In short, Matthew has placed the Sermon on the Mount in a context suffused with the theme of fulfilment: the Sermon is not just a teaching collection, but part of, even the climax of, an event of eschatological fulfilment. The gathering of the crowds and the disciples to Jesus on the mountain in Galilee stands in the tradition of the eschatological gatherings of the people of God (cf. Micah 4.1-2, Isa.2. 2-3; 56.7, Jer 3.17): the disciples who are taught are the foundation of the eschatological community called into being by the (messianic) activity of Jesus, and the crowds - hearers but not yet real followers - are being invited to respond to the signs of eschatological activity being worked in their midst and to join the company of disciples. And the Sermon is the messianic interpretation of Torah for this community, the authoritative revelation of the nature and characteristics which the community is called to exhibit: it is the didache which provides the basis for and prescribes the characteristics of the eschatological community Jesus had come to call into being.

That, I think, is the kind of understanding of the Sermon to which the mountain-location and its precise placing by Matthew points. Do the contents confirm this view? Let us remember that we are not discussing the genuineness (or otherwise) on the lips of Jesus of this or that particular verse or section of the Sermon, but rather the meaning and

function of the whole block of material (three chapters) in the Matthean Gospel. By making the Sermon the first of his major discourses Matthew suggests its foundational character, and by some major redactional or editorial activity he underlines its chief theme. The difficult and much debated unit, 5.17-20, ends with these words,

unless your righteousness shall exceed (or, excel: for the issue is the quality of obedience, rather than its quantity) that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Whether or not this is a dominical saying, it is, in my opinion, quite crucial for understanding a large part of the Sermon. As I hinted when briefly outlining the contents of Matthew's Sermon, what follows - in the famous anti-thesis section - shows what 'more -than-scribal' righteousness looks like as legal principles are not only interiorized but intensified or radicalised (5.21-48): chapter 6.1-18 discloses a 'better-than-Pharisaic' righteousness in the matter and manner of fulfilling the religious obligations of almsgiving, prayer and fasting: and the remainder of the Sermon, 6.19 - 7.27 (a series of loosely related sayings) gives clear and direct examples of 'disciples style' righteousness, e.g. freedom from anxious self-esteem and concern, integrity, sound piety.

But Matthew's interest in and desire for 'righteousness' has been made clear even before v.20 of chapter 5. To the three or four original and genuine Beatitudes which are generally presumed to derive from Q or a pre-Q collection (cf. Luke 6), Matthew adds four or five others inspired by Psalms quotations (the influence of Pss.24 and 37 is particularly strong) or possibly by Jesus' own teaching. But two, however, are quite distinctively Matthean: 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness..' and 'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake...', and both of these, in my view, proclaim the blessedness of those who seek and show *δικαιοσύνη* i.e. conduct or a way of life that is acceptable to God (though it may not be popular) because it is in accordance with his will. The contours of such a way of life and their relationship to the contours of Jewish torah derived behaviour was an important concern of this evangelist, writing to a community with a large Jewish-Christian segment in it and himself probably a Jewish-Christian as well.

The first great discourse - in the setting of the eschatological gathering of the people of God on the mountain - of Messiah Jesus sets out the nature and characteristics of the life of the community he brings into being, and, at the heart of this, is the demand for righteousness ($\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\delta\acute{\omicron}\nu\eta$) - the absence of which leads to the condition of $\alpha\nu\omicron\mu\acute{\iota}\alpha$ 'lawlessness', as 7.21-23 declares. Righteousness, then, for Matthew, it may be fairly claimed, involved conduct and relationships nothing short of that characteristic of the promised age of salvation, /9 the presence of the Kingdom which, for this evangelist, had dawned in both Jesus' healing and his teaching.

Let us move towards our summing up. The Sermon on the Mount is not 'the message of Jesus unadulterated and taken as a whole' (a view ascribed to Mahatma Gandhi). In the setting of Matthew's Gospel, it is a collection of Jesus' words and teachings worked up (even added to) by the evangelist to form an authoritative declaration of the values and attitudes which will inform life in the kingdom-community which Messiah Jesus was inaugurating. Therefore one could call it the magna charta of the Kingdom (as proposed by Matthew) with its ideals, but also its radical demands. /10 A more refined description of the Sermon's function is offered by Hans-Dieter Betz:

The commands of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount cannot simply be regarded as legal provisions subject to outward fulfilment. Rather, they are to be regarded as a set of instructions whose purpose is to educate the disciple of Jesus [and I would add, 'the would-be disciple' of Jesus as well] so that he may be able to recognize for himself the demands of God which apply to him and thus do justice in his thought and conduct to the will of God. /11

With the terminology of 'commands' and 'instructions' I am less than happy: they make the Sermon into something like a nova lex: but Betz is right, I think, in seeing the Sermon in Matthew as setting out the entire ethos of the Kingdom with which the disciple must identify if his membership of the community of the Kingdom is to be genuine. /12 The Sermon is didache, teaching, and intended to be taken seriously, it is not sectarian morality for those individuals isolated from the world. The new righteousness here declared by all means takes account of the realities of the world: for instance, divorce is permitted in

the case of adultery as it is not in Mark's Gospel (cf. Matthew 5.3 with Mark 10.11). Fasting, praying, almsgiving are required exercise of piety (note their rejection in the Gospel of Thomas), but they must differ from the practice of both the Jews and the Gentiles in their seriousness and adequacy. The ethics of a higher righteousness is the order of a new and more perfect - that is, more dedicated, more devoted in love - community. This 'perfection' (and Matthew alone of the Synoptic writers uses the term) is the goal of the conduct of all Kingdom-disciples: nothing indicates a special ethics for advanced members of the community. 'Everyone' who hears these sayings of mine...', says the Jesus of the Sermon - and 'hearing' means 'paying attention to', even 'obeying';

everyone who hears these sayings of mine and does them shall be like a man who built his house on rock...

Although it takes me beyond the very specific subject of the Sermon's setting in Matthew's Gospel, I cannot resist quoting Eduard Schweizer's observation on that verse:

Just as a man does not really hear music until it sets his feet in motion, so a man does not really hear Jesus' words until they are transformed into action and permeate his being. /13

Matthew would have agreed. The righteousness proclaimed in his Sermon stands as the inspiration and challenge for the living of disciples' life in the community of the Kingdom. But, remember always, the Sermon on the Mount is part of Matthew's Gospel -book; it is not the whole nor is it the whole of Jesus' teaching for Matthew. If we read or treat the Sermon on the Mount in isolation we do so contrary to Matthew's purpose and we shall end up with a shallow moralism or what sometimes appears to be kerygmatic amoralism which, in its despair before the radicalism of the words, evacuates them of any real significance for the understanding for Jesus himself or for the business of living. The Sermon occurs after 4.23-25 which tells that Jesus went about not only teaching and preaching but 'healing every disease and every infirmity among the people'. And the same emphasis on the mercy of Jesus' activity re-emerges immediately after the Sermon, in chapters 8 and 9 with their account of Jesus' healing miracles. Before and after the Sermon

and its demand stands the compassion of the Messiah. In Matthew's work, says W.D. Davies,

the words of Jesus Messiah bring us to the climax of God's demand, but they do this in the context of a ministry which is the expression of the ultimate mercy. /14

Whether in attempting, however tentatively, to make of Jesus' expression of the 'ultimate demand' (which seems so little governed by any consideration of historical contingency) a way of life (halakah), a vision of Kingdom-life, and the basis for it, Matthew wholly departed from Jesus, it is not possible to decide categorically owing to the extreme complexity of our sources. But we may well ask whether Jesus was always concerned with proclaiming the demand and not also sometimes with the contingencies of existence. There are, I think, traces of Jesus as traditor of Wisdom which have also to go into the picture.

But to return to the issue in hand, the setting of Matthew's Sermon: the infinite demand is embedded in infinite succor: they both belong together: Jesus' acts and his words are congruous. He displayed the utmost agape to the lost and demanded the utmost agape of his own. The words of the Sermon on the Mount - as patterned by Matthew - lie between these twin poles and are themselves congruous with them. It is this insight that made Matthew set the Antitheses after the Beatitudes and close them with a demand for watchfulness as before some 'threat' (implied at least), but to embed the whole of his Sermon in the context of the Messiah's ministry of compassion.

Notes

. The topically-arranged Sermon in parables in Mark 4 may also be a recollection of such an early extended discourse by Jesus.

. If any or all of these were in the Q-tradition, then Luke presumably eliminated them as being unsuitable for the Gentile Christians for whom he has primarily destined his account.

. Cf. R.H. Gundry, Matthew: A Commentary on his Literary and Theological Art (Erdmans, Grand Rapids; 1982) pp.11-12.

4. I owe this quotation to H.K. McArthur, Understanding the Sermon on the Mount (Epworth, London, 1961). p.23.
5. The important work on this has been done by Paul S. Minear, 'The Disciples and the Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew', Anglican Theol Review Supplement 3 (1974), pp.28-44. Note that the crowds throng around Jesus (4.5; 8.1,18; 9.36; 13.2; 14.13; 15.30; 19.2; 20.29); they hear and acclaim his teaching (7.28f.); they glorify God on his behalf (9.8; 15.31) and they acknowledge Jesus in messianic terms (12.23; 21.9-11): they are presented as a major objective of Jesus' ministry - he carries out his ministry of teaching, preaching and healing among them; he has compassion on their physical and spiritual hunger (9.36; 14.14; 15.32) and speaks of them as a ready harvest (9.37f). Matthew distinguishes the from the disciples and from the Jewish leaders (cf. J.D. Kingsbury The Parables of Jesus in Matthew 13 (SPCK, London; 1969, pp.24-28). Matthew excludes them from denunciations addressed to the leaders (cf. Matthew 3.7 'many of the scribes and Pharisees' and Luke 3.7, 'the crowds') and shows that the crowds did not share the negative estimate of Jesus' person (9.1-8, 32-34; 12.22-29; 21.14,17,26; 22.32f; 23.1 and par).
6. It goes back at least to B.W. Bacon, Studies in Matthew (Constable; 1930).
7. W. D. Davies, The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount (C.U.P., 1966) p.108
8. D.E. Nineham, The Gospel according to Mark (Pelican Gospel commentaries: Harmondsworth, Middlesex; 1963). p.114.
9. Cf. the language of the Beatitudes and that found in Isa. 61.1-3.
10. Cf. J. Fitzmyer, The Gospel of Luke (Anchor Bible series: Doubleday, New York; 1981). Vol.1 p.629
11. H.D. Betz, 'Die hermeneutischen Prinzipien in der Bergpredigt (Mt.5:17-20)' in Verification (Festschrift for G. Ebeling: Tübingen Mohr, 1982). pp.27-41; quotation from p.41.

2. Elsewhere Betz (Journal for Religion, 59(1979) pp.285-97: 'The Sermon on the Mount; its literary genre and function') suggests that the function of the Sermon on the Mount is to provide the disciple of Jesus with the necessary tool for becoming a 'Jesus-theologian'. 'Hearing and doing the sayings of Jesus enables the disciple to theologize creatively along the lines of the master's theology. The Sermon is not law to be obeyed, rather, it is theology to be appropriated intellectually and internalized, in order then to be developed creatively and implemented in concrete situations of life'. Here Professor Betz is concerned with how the Sermon may function for the Christian disciple today, rather than with how it functions in its setting in Matthew's Gospel.
3. E. Schweizer, The Good News According to Matthew (SPCK, London; 1976) p.192.
4. W.D. Davies, The Setting of the Sermon p.434.
I am indebted to this great work for the ideas which follow in this paper.

Baruch Halpern,

The Emergence of Israel in Canaan

(Scholars Press 1984. pp.xiii,334)

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Having discussed his method of approach and the most reliable (biblical) sources available, the author turns to a consideration of the historical and social model most appropriate to our understanding of the emergence of Israel. Gottwald's peasant revolution is generally played down in favour of a more traditional view of Israel's having originated on the mountain areas of west Jordan where it attracted to it refugees from the city-states of the plains. The development of this Israel and its gradually emerging self-understanding are to be traced primarily in the tribal lists, especially Judg.5 and Deut.33, the latter deriving from the time of Saul. The inter-relationships of the tribes revealed here are open to further elaboration in terms of evolving national institutions, among which cultic unity must be assigned a particularly significant role.

Among the best sections of this book, that on the interpretation of the Amarna texts should be particularly mentioned. The weaknesses in Gottwald's interpretation in terms of class struggle are clearly shown, and a question mark is set against the common assumption of declining Egyptian influence in Canaan in this period. Again, several good observations are made on the tribal lists (and not only the twelve tribe lists) as a source for reconstructing a reliable framework of historical development of Israel, and on the formative role of the cult in articulating Israel's emergent unity.

However, it must also be said that the value of anything that the author has to say is severely compromised by an obscure and verbose style which is at times impenetrable, at times puzzling, at times simply irritating, but surely always unnecessary. 'Mendenhall's reflections stand in a homiletic tradition that uses history for punctuation...The homily is legitimate enough. Its attachment to the history in a rather arbitrary union seems in the light of its logical independence comparable to the practice of attaching pork-barrel riders to legislative bills guaranteeing the continuation of vital services' (pp.252f). It is this kind of writing which made it seem a welcome relief to finish this book.

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A.D.H.Mayes

A. D. H. Mayes, The Story of Israel between Settlement and Exile, a redactional study of the Deuteronomistic History

SCM Press, London, 1983 pp x+202 £7.50

In this careful piece of detailed scholarship, Dr. Mayes (of Trinity College, Dublin) has made an important contribution in the field of Old Testament introduction. By "the Deuteronomistic History" he means Deuteronomy itself, plus Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings, to each of which he devotes a full chapter of analysis and discussion; and for good measure a final section of the book explores the relationship between the Deuteronomistic History and the Pentateuch. In short, this monograph offers a closely reasoned and coherent account of the nature and interrelationship of about half of the entire Old Testament; and as such it deserves to stand beside our basic and standard Old Testament Introductions such as Eissfeldt and Fohrer.

Old Testament criticism has moved a long way since the Wellhausen era. It was natural enough for biblical scholarship last century to follow the lead of Jewish tradition and treat the Pentateuch as paramount; so that by the beginning of this century the regnant Documentary Hypothesis, which had isolated, defined and dated the various strata of the Pentateuch, had set up the Pentateuch as the centre and heart and basis of the Old Testament. The historical books that follow it in the Old Testament were in the nature of an appendix (or series of appendices) to it; it was generally held that the Pentateuchal sources could be seen in these books too.

In the work of A. D. H. Mayes we find this picture of Pentateuch and historical books inverted: the Deuteronomistic History (as a whole, and including Deuteronomy itself) was the first major literary work to take shape. It is complete in itself, and the Tetrach

(Genesis - Numbers) was a later composition, expressly intended to serve as a preface to the Deuteronomistic History. If so - and Mayes would seem to be following a series of major trends in Old Testament scholarship - our future understanding of the Old Testament as a whole is bound to be very different. Its centre and pivot will certainly have shifted radically.

However, it is not Mayes's primary purpose to put the Pentateuch in its proper place. First and foremost, he is concerned to demonstrate that on analysis each book of the Deuteronomistic History reveals the same general phenomena. Against M. Noth's insistence on the unitary nature of the Deuteronomistic History, Mayes asserts that we can always perceive two layers, and sometimes a third. The original deuteronomistic historian wrote in the time of Josiah (he can also be described as an editor, since he was utilizing a great deal of older material); a later editor not only updated the story, bringing it down to the Exile, but added his own characteristic theological emphases, which reinforced but yet were not identical with the older work.

This hypothesis began with a brief essay by F. M. Cross in 1973; it was argued in greater detail, especially at the linguistic level, by R. D. Nelson in 1981; now Mayes has provided a comprehensive treatment, which may well prove to be the definitive account of it. There are signs that it may prove to be the regnant hypothesis, at least for some considerable time.

Yet redaction criticism, like source criticism, is basically a speculative exercise, and Dr. Mayes makes no claim to "assured solutions". One can see two general possibilities for counter-argument. On the one hand, it could be argued that the theological differences between the two layers do not always amount to much (Mayes himself sometimes calls them "subtle" distinctions), and that Noth's perception of the Deuteronomistic History as a unity may not be so far wrong after all. On the other hand, it could be argued that later editing is not all of a piece, and that the second deuteronomistic editor is a

chimera. But the great merit of Mayes's work is that he does impose coherence on a large segment of the Old Testament; and it will be much easier to challenge his findings here and there than to demolish his whole hypothesis.

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W. Zimmerli, Ezekiel 2. A commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel chapters 25-48. Translated by J. D. Martin. (Hermeneia).

Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1983.
xxxiv, 606 pp. \$39.95.

This second large volume completes the English edition of the late Walther Zimmerli's comprehensive commentary on the book of Ezekiel. This commentary has been many years in the making. It was initially written in German for the *Biblischer Kommentar* series, its first fascicle appeared in 1955, and the full two-volume German work became available in 1969. Fortress Press, recognizing its worth, commissioned its translation for their own magisterial commentary series, *Hermeneia*. Volume 1 (translated by R. E. Clements) was published in 1979. In that same year, in the second German edition, Zimmerli was able to reflect on a number of important recent studies on Ezekiel; this was done by way of a preface, which is now incorporated (in translation, of course) in this second *Hermeneia* volume. It is worth observing that no reader will be content with one volume of the two; those who possess only volume 1 will be deprived of this valuable Preface, while those who possess only volume 2 will have none of the comprehensive and indispensable Introduction (77 pages in volume 1).

There is no doubt that this is a very fine commentary and it is hard to imagine that it will be displaced as the standard work on Ezekiel for many years to come. For each section of Ezekiel, Zimmerli begins by offering his own translation, establishing the Hebrew text and giving detailed textual and linguistic notes; he then discusses "Form", "Setting", "Interpretation" (with verse-by-verse exegesis), and finally "Aim". Each section is also given its own bibliography. The only aspect of presentation which calls for criticism is that more tabulation would have been helpful. In a commentary of this size and bulk it can be difficult at times to locate the discussion one wants; for instance, it is particularly difficult to get

an overall picture of the strata in Ezekiel 40-48, and a table would have given clarity to the discussion.

In general terms, Zimmerli's view of authorship and redaction is middle-of-the-road. He is certainly careful not to deny material to the prophet himself on inadequate criteria. One can only applaud his insistence that "the basis of all literary-critical work must be an openness to, and not a fundamental distrust of, the very claim of the text itself. The traditional text, which must certainly then be subjected to further thoughtful and critical examination using and combining various courses of inquiry, happens to be the basis of all judgment." (p. xiv). His own decisions are based on objective criteria, not on any preconceived and arbitrary theories. It is clear that Zimmerli remained to be convinced of any major Deuteronomistic redaction of Ezekiel; and it could well be that the present trend to see the Deuteronomists' hand everywhere needs challenging. Nevertheless, Zimmerli preserved an open mind, and this is one area where recent and current studies may well compel adjustment of the redactional picture offered by Zimmerli. Of course other questions too will from time to time invite different answers; it should be noted that L. J. McGregor's 1983 PhD thesis in this University represents a significant advance on Zimmerli's position as regards the textual criticism of Ezekiel.

All in all this commentary is a fitting monument to Zimmerli's memory.

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D. F. Payne.

Jas L. Crenshaw (Ed),

Theodicy in the Old Testament

SPCK, London, 1983. pp.163

Theodicy in the Old Testament is a useful collection of essays drawn from the writings of well known Old Testament scholars over the past 80 years or so. The first three essays (by W. Eichrodt, R.J. Williams, and Klaus Koch) tackle issues to do with the general problems of theodicy in Israel and in the Ancient Near East. The remaining five essays focus on specific portions of the OT, namely, The Confessions of Jeremiah (Gerhard von Rad), Job (A.S. Peake), Psalm 73 (Martin Buber), Sirach (J.L. Crenshaw), and Koheleth (Hartmut Gese).

The collection of essays is preceded by a provocative introduction by Crenshaw, who defines theodicy 'loosely' as 'the attempt to pronounce a verdict of 'Not Guilty' over God for whatever seems to destroy the order of society and the universe'. /1 His thesis is that theodicy inevitably sacrifices human integrity. He concludes, 'In ancient Israel defense of God was no idle chatter, but was purchased at a great cost.' /2

The eight essays are a valuable survey of approaches to these problems by eminent theologians from the turn of the century. The subject is approached from a wide variety of points of view; and the selection of essays has the merit that they are none of them mere summaries of what has been said previously on a given topic, but rather each essay is chosen because the author in it has made a significant contribution to the subject.

Of particular interest, perhaps is Klaus's article, entitled 'Is there a doctrine of retribution in the Old Testament?' (1955). He questions the commonly held view that (in Eichrodt's words) there is a 'deeply-rooted belief in retribution' in the Old Testament from earliest times; /3 and advances instead the view that the fundamental notion in the Old Testament is the 'concept of actions with built-in consequences' - a concept which was to be shaken 'to the foundation' by the time of Koheleth and Job. /4 Koch notes at the end that he has not touched upon the relevance to the topic of important traditions such as Election, Covenant etc., /5 but it would have been useful somewhere within the collection of essays to have had some discussion of

the distinction between the Wisdom doctrine of rewards, and the so-called deuteronomic theology, which, after all, offers prosperity for the nation's obedience and disaster as the consequence of disobedience, but this not as the norm of human existence, but rather as an exceptional arrangement between Yahweh and Israel as the elect nation.

Among the treatments of individual books or portions within the Old Testament special mention might be made of Peake's early (1905) discussion of the Book of Job, and in particular of the Yahweh speech at the end. While Peake penetratingly analyses the content of the speech, it is a little lame when he finally says:

But why does he permit God to speak and yet offer no solution of the problem? Probably he had no solution, or he would surely have so constructed his poem as not simply to indicate it, but to throw it into relief.

In Peake's favour, however, it is to be said that he draws attention to the importance of the Prologue, and the wager between God and Satan, so often left out of account in discussion of the underlying meaning of the book. Peake points out that in a sense the reader knows the answer to the problem: it is contained in the Prologue; but this is something that Job must never know unless the effect of the story is to be ruined. Perhaps he could have gone a stage further and asked if in looking for God to vindicate himself we are not looking for an answer to the wrong question. Taking the Book from the perspective of the Prologue, it is not God that is on trial, it is Job; and the charge is 'Does Job fear God for nought?' /7 On this charge Job can indeed be acquitted: and hence the happy ending of the book.

Finally, reference might be made to the thought-provoking insight into Koheleth by Helmut Gese, who asserts, for example:

According to early wisdom the entire future arises out of the present whereas Koheleth would like to judge the present only from the perspective of the future. For him the end is more important than the beginning (the essence of the statements in 7.1-18); therefore, any judgement of the present is impossible. /8

- a viewpoint which certainly helped me towards finding a worthwhile message in this puzzling book.

All in all the reader will find this a stimulating collection of perspectives on theodicy, spanning 80 years, but not just a survey, rather a selection of viewpoints which will whet the appetite for further study.

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J. Patton Taylor

Notes

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| 1. Page 1 | 5. Page 83 |
| 2. Page 12 | 6. Page 107 |
| 3. Page 57 | 7. Job 1.9 RSV |
| 4. Page 82 | 8. Page 147 |

Christopher Tuckett (editor). The Messianic Secret
(Issues in Religion and Theology 1).
Fortress, Philadelphia and SPCK, London
1983. Pp.xi + 148. £3.50

This is not an easy book to review since it does not present one viewpoint throughout but consists of a number of distinct reactions to the work of Wrede on Mark, and in the limited space available it has not been possible to present every reaction. It would be easy to list others. On the whole the attempt does successfully offer a valuable conspectus of views. (A few articles are missing from the bibliography. The work of Blevins listed there as a thesis has now been published, though not properly updated). The volume is introduced by a very competent survey of the field by Christopher Tuckett.

work on Mark is carried on today in the shadow of Wrede. For that reason it is surprising that it was not until 1971 that his monograph, first published in German in 1901, was translated into English. Generations of students who knew no German had to put up until then with what can only be described as bowdlerized accounts of what Wrede had suggested. His work thus failed in large part to affect two whole generations. Perhaps R.H. Lightfoot was the first English writer to appreciate Wrede. One of his books is mentioned in the bibliography but so far as I can trace he is not referred to in the book itself. Lightfoot's influence however came more through his pupils than from his own direct writing on the subject.

Wrede isolated certain peculiar features about the second Gospel. There were commands to silence to demons, to people who had been healed and to disciples, commands which in at least some cases it could not have been possible to observe. Some at least of the teaching Jesus was given in secret to the disciples. Related to this was the repeated failure of the disciples to understand Jesus. The disciples were instructed at one point to say nothing until after the resurrection (9.9). This gave Wrede his clue for explaining these facts. It was only with the resurrection that Jesus was recognized as Messiah. Later messianic claims were then read back into the life of Jesus. To account for the difference Wrede propounded his theory of the messianic secret. Perhaps more important than his solution to these difficult facts was the way in which by drawing attention to them he succeeded in killing once and for all the idea that Mark wrote a simple biography of Jesus. After Wrede no one could deny that Mark had theological rather than biographical intentions. Scholars who have paid heed to Wrede have since then struggled with the theological overtones, and undertones, in the Gospel.

It is not to say that a uniform picture has emerged about Mark's intentions. A uniform view has not emerged even about the facts in the Gospel to which Wrede drew attention. The various essays in the book reveal this if nothing else. Many questions still remain: how much of what to which Wrede drew attention was Mark's own creation? How much due to him in the tradition? Is it possible to tie all the facts together into a single theory or are there different explanations for different facts? How do we relate the passages where the glory of Jesus is revealed with those where the attempt is made to keep it secret?

In addition to his introductory essay Tuckett has chosen articles by N.A. Dahl, J.B. Tyson, T.A. Burkill, G. Strecker, E. Schweizer, U. Luz, W.C. Robinson, Jr., J.D.G. Dunn and an extract from a book on the subject by H. Raisanen. Only minor criticisms could be made of this selection. There is however a major criticism to be made on the structure of the book. Is the format of an introductory essay followed by nine modern (none is earlier than 1958) articles the most suitable? It means a certain repetition of material as each author summarizes Wrede. It necessarily omits some of the major writing on the subject since this has appeared in book form rather than as individual articles. There is no extensive quotation from Wrede himself. An alternative layout would have been an expansion of Tuckett's essay with the inclusion of extensive quotations from the major writers to whom he alludes and no essays. In this way the ground would have been covered more adequately and students would have been introduced to the major contributors in their own words. A minor criticism related to the way in which articles and books are referred to when there is more than one contribution; the date of the English translation is given. It would have been better to supply the date of the original. On at least one occasion an author seems to refer to a book that had not appeared when he wrote.

Despite these criticisms this is a book to be welcomed. Both Dr Tuckett and the publishers of the series, 'Issues in Religion and Theology' of which this is the first volume, are to be congratulated on successfully bringing to birth their first child. It will be warmly received by teachers who can now turn their English speaking students to a comprehensive survey of the issues.

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Ernest Best

Elliott C. Maloney.

Semitic Interference in Marcan Syntax

(SBL Dissertation Series 51) Pp. xvii + 311.

Scholars Press, Chico, California 95926. 1981.

Maloney examines the Gospel of Mark in order to ascertain the extent of Semitic interference in its syntax and to display the particular ways in which it is found. After a very detailed, thorough and precise discussion of particular issues and texts, he concludes that there are several types of semitism in the Gospel. He summarizes these in a concluding chapter which it would be impossible to further summarize

here. Since many scholars hold that Mark both used tradition and composed part of the Gospel it is to be regretted that he has not examined the degree of interference in these two possible areas to see if it is the same or could be used as a tool to separate them.

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M. Hengel, The Charismatic Leader and his Followers
English translation James Greig.
T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh. 1981. £7.95

The fact that it was deemed worthwhile to include this study in the very welcome new series, Studies in the New Testament and its World, editor John Riches, (T. & T. Clark), the original German of which first appeared in 1968, points at once to the ongoing significance of Martin Hengel's scholarly agenda and the way in which important questions in the study of the New Testament continue to reassert themselves, despite the changing fashions in biblical studies. Fifteen years ago it was a brave scholar who would attempt to address the question of the historical Jesus head on, as Hengel does in this study, in face of the then dominance of the Bultmannians in German N.T. scholarship. Today, the work of Gerd Theissen and others in the social setting of the Jesus movement has once again shown how central the figure of Jesus is to a proper understanding of Christian origins. Suddenly the historical work of Hengel takes on a new importance at the centre, rather than the fringes of the New Testament studies.

Hengel takes as his starting point for this study the very concrete social and religious concern of respect for the dead in Judaism and evaluates the genuine break with sacrosanct Jewish custom that Jesus inaugurated on the basis of the Q saying (Mt.8:21f - Lk.9:59f): 'Let the dead bury their dead', which underlines the unconditional nature of Jesus' call to follow him.

Having thus established the unique character of Jesus' call, Hengel next tests his conclusion that its radical nature can only be understood in the light of his eschatological and messianic consciousness. Various examples of total attachment to a leader are examined from

both the Jewish and hellenistic cultures with the attention to detail that only somebody of Hengel's wide ranging control of primary sources and thoroughness could muster. Examples of radical demands and corresponding breaks with the past are to be found in 'contexts where traditional order and its standards are repeatedly broken down or indeed rejected outright' (p.34). Here Max Weber's ideas on the charismatic personality are briefly introduced to highlight the innovative quality of Jesus' ministry, something that in the Weberian analysis can only be transmitted partially, as followers become guardians of a tradition and bound by the 'canonical' inheritance from the master. Helpful as this insight is, an interaction model of the charismatic figure, such as that proposed by more recent anthropologists, would do more justice to the historical data that Hengel has presented, in that it would locate the charismatic within an existing milieu of disaffection, whose gift then would be to articulate and redirect those feelings towards the creation of a new vision of reality.

However, that might be sailing too close to dangerous theological waters, and there can be no doubt that Weber's ideas suit the presentation of Jesus' distinctive charismatic and eschatological call to discipleship, as Hengel wishes to develop the argument in the final part of the work. Firstly, various Jewish types that have sometimes been suggested for Jesus are rejected: he was neither a political revolutionary of the various types present in first century Palestine, nor can he be regarded as a rabbi in such a way that he can be placed within 'any discoverable uniform teaching tradition of Judaism'. Consequently, his call to discipleship cannot be understood in the light of either of these types' relationship with their followers. As these negative conclusions were being developed Hengel was preparing the ground for his more positive treatment of the call of Jesus and its uniqueness, yet it could be asked, whether in his desire to discover a 'uniqueness' to Jesus call, as against others that can be characterised in more typical fashion, Hengel has not moulded the evidence to fit his presuppositions? For example, we hear that 'Jesus was not interested in placing himself at the head of an enthusiastic crowd' (p.59), yet on the very next page we read that 'he did not found a community of the holy remnant, sealed off from the outside world, but remained open to all Israel (p.60). Or again, to suggest that Jesus' call to discipleship was addressed to all Israel and not to individuals especially chosen, would be 'to bring him dangerously

close to those apocalyptic enthusiasts who called the Jewish population of Palestine to follow them' (p.62). But surely Jesus was dangerously close to such enthusiasts, so close in fact that he was put to death as one, irrespective of whether the charge was trumped up or not. Hengel wants to confine the call to discipleship to individuals rather than to the crowd, but in doing so he has, it would seem, over-individualised that call so that Jesus' followers do not emerge clearly as an historical entity within first century Palestinian life. One can understand the desire to differentiate between those actively following Jesus, and what Theissen calls, 'the sympathisers in the local communities', but this should not lead to the neglect of the community aspect of discipleship also, especially as exemplified by the Twelve.

The subsequent treatment develops the unique position of Jesus with his unheard of self-confidence, born of his sense of messianic authority, 'that cuts across all the analogies in the field of religionsgeschichte which are known to us from Judaism' (p.66), and may well include the appropriation of messianic titles. The disciples' call belongs to this unique consciousness of Jesus whereby they are invited to share in his eschatological sense of mission, as can be seen in the linking of his call to follow him with the commissioning and mission. Hence the absence of any strong teacher/pupil associations and the detailed study and learning patterns that we find in rabbinic schools, even though this does not exclude some teaching, whose conscious goal was not to develop a tradition, but to prepare for the service of the coming rule of God.

This summary of a short book, which is rich in its information and discussion of issues that have bedevilled N.T. research into the life of Jesus, does not do full justice to the many interesting avenues it opens up. Hengel is forthright in the positions he espouses, and they are always supported by plenty of evidence. Not everybody will agree that it is possible to find a uniqueness for the historical Jesus with the assurance that Hengel has, by the means of historical criticism alone. Yet those who would seek to challenge such a conclusion will have to deal critically with this book, which is at once a statement of faith and a scholarly work. For Martin Hengel these two dimensions of his work are inextricably bound together.

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Sean Freyne

K. Rahner,

The Sacrament of Penance

Theological Investigations Volume 15

Darton, Longman and Todd. £25.00

A consideration of the concept of penance, raises inevitably, questions about the understanding of sin, grace, salvation and is therefore an excellent starting point for an exploration of the differing emphases in Roman Catholic and Protestant theology on the central issue of the way of salvation. Karl Rahner has written extensively on the theme of penance from the standpoint of a systematic theologian. At least seven essays in previous volumes of the Theological Investigations series deal directly and explicitly with the issues involved. He has, as well, contributed major surveys re the concept to important dictionaries, notably in English translation Sacramentum Mundi Vol.4 and the Concise Theological Dictionary. The general reader seeking to come to terms with contemporary Roman Catholic thought on the theme of penance, would well be advised to begin with a study of the dictionary articles of Rahner, before attempting the fuller consideration of specific aspects in the essays referred to above. Volume 15 of Theological Investigations adds little that is new in relation to the systematic theological exploration of penance - it is rather devoted to a presentation of the history of penance in the early church. Rahner also sees it as a defence against the suspicion that he is 'only a speculative theologian who works without reference to history'. He affirms by contrast that theological process here cannot be made except by a continually new confrontation with history. In the process Rahner has given us an important contribution to the study of one aspect of Christian spirituality in the patristic era.

The essays in this volume, though they have come from an earlier period of his theological work have been thoroughly revised and over 100 pages of notes and a comprehensive bibliography provide us with a splendid compendium of relevant literature.

The central portion of the book is devoted to studies in the history of penance in the Roman tradition (The Shepherd of Hermas and Irenaeus), the African tradition (Tertullian and Cyprian) and the tradition of the East (Didascalia Apostolorum and Origen). These specialist and detailed studies are introduced by a brief survey of

the history of penance as a whole, which provides the context in which Rahner seeks to clarify the significance and distinctiveness of the view of each of the Fathers considered. He argues that there exists in the Church a specific sacrament of penance, initiated by Christ; a sacrament which is distinct from baptism, though it presupposes and is based on baptism, and which represents a new expression of the effective proclamation of forgiveness to baptized Christians. Where the Council of Trent appealed principally to John 20 as the classical text for the institution of the sacrament of penance, Rahner would prefer to take Matthew 16 and 18 as the starting point. Exegesis of these texts cannot afford to ignore his arguments. The purpose of the sacrament relates of course to the Christian's experience of being at once justified and yet a sinner, for 'despite its high esteem of baptism, the New Testament recognises that Christians do commit sins - from the every-day faults due to our weakness to scandals which do not occur even among pagans, including the perversion of the truth of the gospel and the reversion to paganism and judaism'. The seriousness with which Roman Catholic theology grapples with the consequences of the effects of sin in the Christian is instructive. If Jung and other psychoanalysts affirm that Protestants are more likely to end up as their patients than Catholics who practise the sacrament of penance, is this because Protestant theology has in part failed to explore fully the reconciling ministry of the Church to Christians burdened with guilt feelings over their failures in discipleship?

A short review cannot do justice to the wealth of scholarship presented here, nor to the scope of the historical issues surveyed. Though much of this is by its nature material for the specialist, there are sounded throughout issues of general concern for the consideration of Christian spirituality and the dialogue between the Churches. I find myself stimulated by Rahner's presentation but not a little concerned as to how those who stand in the Reformed tradition can respond positively to the challenge of his thought.

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R.N. Brown

Jose Miguez Bonino,

Toward a Christian Political Ethic

SCM. 1983

Pp.126. £5.50

Latin American theologians have taught us to expect from them weighty and significant contributions to the old age questions of theology and ethics as they have had to face these in their contemporary situation in the second half of this century. Bonino stands high among these authors. He is Professor of Systematic Theology at Instituto Superior Evangelico de Estudios Teologicos in Bueno Aires, Argentina, and has been a member of the Presidium of the World Council of Churches.

In this book we have a survey of the stances of philosophers and theologians as they tackled the dilemma: 'What am I as a responsible person to do about political power, economic structures and personal freedom?' In the western world we have ducked the issue of corporate or communal response to the state by taking refuge in how the individual ought to live and act as an isolated person. Individual ethics and theological or religious roots for the same, have proved an easier realm in which to be versed than the complex and confused arena of social and political choices and practices.

The author starts from Plato and Aristotle and proceeds through Rousseau, Locke and Kant with the same ease and acquaintanceship as when he handles Augustine, Luther, Troeltsch, Niebuhr and Tillich. He brings out the difference between the earlier periods and that of the modern one which has seen the proliferation and escalation of power structures which, wily-nilly, we find shaping our lives. Excusing his work for being 'in the realm of theory' he says that this 'theory is necessary to make explicit the presuppositions and assumptions of our action, as well as to expose and critically examine forms of action suggested to us'. He acknowledges that 'theologians are singularly ill-prepared for a theoretical work that must necessarily be interdisciplinary in nature, dealing as it does with an area (political life) and a group of sciences (the social sciences in general) with which they have usually had little experience.'

The junior minister in the government of the U.K. who recently told clergy 'to 'keep out of politics' and 'stick to their proper task of

aving souls' should expose himself to what Bonino has to say about the 'omnipresence of politics'. Did Luther, with his 'two kingdoms' theory, encourage Hitler who told Martin Niemöller to confine his concerns to the spirits of people and their hereafter and leave the state to get on with their physical welfare here on earth. Is a theology of vocation for the individual expressing love, honesty and self-dedication, sufficient to do justice to the rough and tumble of the nuclear era, racist regimes, oppressive militarists, multinational monetarists and the like?

Bonino traces the Life and Work Movement of the 1920's, through the great ecumenical gatherings like Oxford, 1937 and Amsterdam, 1948, the emergence of the idea of 'The Responsible Society' to assist Christians to direct their peculiarly important political and social efforts. He shows how at Geneva, 1966, in the heyday of that revolutionary decade, the WCC conference on 'Church and Society' shared in a new sense of active participation in radical reforms and revolutionary movements and trends. This was matched in the Roman Communion, through Vatican II, with radical new thinking, reducing the role of natural law and encouraging the emergence of personalist anthropological and Biblical humanist categories as more appropriate for the Church in the new world of the period. He also investigates the position of those who, from Reformation days, took their stand on non-violence, stressing the meaning of suffering, an authentic voluntary community with sacrificial following of Jesus. For Bonino the ministry and message of Jesus was through and through political and he finds it of profound contemporary importance. However he says 'Too sharp a distinction between the two kingdoms seems to lead to a blind acceptance of the powers that be, on their terms, excluding the Gospel, while concentration on the way of the Cross seems to lead to isolationism and utopianism'. How is it possible to hold together love and power, justice and order, in thought and practical activity?

are given the concept of 'double location' - 'On the one hand there is the theologian's 'location' within a theological discipline, with its particular epistemological conditions and demands; on the other hand the theologian is also a social agent within a particular social formation'. That supplies a proper perspective in which 'to do theology'. It prevents us from substituting theological categories for sociological categories. It also emphasises that theology has no other

way of 'knowing' the realm of the political except through social analysis.

Once he has laid the theological groundwork he proceeds in the second half of the book to introduce a specific historical 'case' - that of the Latin American experience - so that it may prove helpful in elaborating an approach to a theological political ethic. The decisive moments in the social history of Latin America have been characterized by the presence, in greater or less degree, of important religious dimensions or components - Roman and Protestant. Therefore it is possible to see how damaging or how liberating these have been and may be. From this study he can turn to examine Biblical teaching on faithfulness, justice, shalom to show some sort of answer to Augustine's 'right question': How is God's sovereignty - his kingdom, his city - present and active in the events of history? This supplies the 'right order of priorities', particularly the pervasive concern for the poor in God's dealing with mankind.

Utopian views are investigated as they arise so readily from Christian hope. More realistic assessment of how God has acted, in specific cases, and not just in a vague, general way, throws up a 'historical identification of priorities', a discernment made visible and available in Jesus Christ. He goes on to see how the peoples may be made aware ('Conscientized' has come into our jargon since 1970) of themselves and their dignity. How can they be helped to endure, maintain their personal integrity, depending on the Holy Spirit to support them in their enduring struggle?

An epilogue breathes the spirit of the whole book, showing how liberation of people must not be detached from loving concern for their oppressors who also have anxieties, fear of being dispossessed, even annihilated physically. He finishes with four 'tracks' along which laying down one's life for others could be pursued for ethical reflection:

- (1) There is the matter of personal identity, the reality of the human subject in the project;
- (2) there is the fact of hatred for the enemy which has to be subordinated to love of brother and sister and the humanity of the enemy has to be respected;

- (3) there is the question of transcendence and eschatology which alone can keep the process of liberation from becoming absolute in itself;
- (4) there is the question of death - always to be related to the death of Jesus Christ, who seemed abandoned by God, yet there we find God in loving action, the practice of vacarious love through death reaching its final consummation.

This book raises for an Irish reviewer or reader the necessity of examining, as a 'specific case', the history of his own country, the influence on its society and politics of the churches, the failure of utopian solutions which seem to arise so readily from Christian faith, and the need to discern an order of priorities inspired and redefined constantly by honest and sustained Biblical research coupled with the insights of social sciences regarding human need and divine provision of justice and peace.

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J.R. Boyd

Frank Whaling (Ed.), John and Charles Wesley
SPCK 1981

This book, one of the very useful series "The Classics of Western Spirituality" is valuable both for the Selected Prayers, Hymns, Journal Notes, Sermons, Letters and Treatises which it contains and also for Whaling's expert analysis of the Wesleyan contribution to spirituality. Whaling begins by providing a useful biographical sketch of John Wesley's life up to his Aldersgate experience in 1738, and moves on to consider the Methodist movement of the following decades. He does not consider this an isolated phenomenon of the 18th century but prefers to examine it in relation to other groups that contributed to the Evangelical Revival viz Moravians, Calvinistic Methodists (those loosely organised round George Whitfield and the Countess of Huntingdon), the "half-regular" (so Wesley) evangelical clergy closely associated with Methodists (e.g. Thomson, Bennet, Grimshaw of Howarth and Fletcher

of Madeley), and the 'regular' Evangelical clergy, such as Samuel Walker of Truro. Points of controversy with these groups are not overlooked, particularly the Calvinistic controversy with Whitefield and the issue of 'lay preachers' which caused so much concern to the 'regular' Evangelical clergy of the Church of England.

Whaling affirms a direct link between the theology of the Wesleys and their spirituality, since these doctrines they emphasised are directly concerned with experimental Christianity. Similar to the view expressed by Albert Outler in his biography of John Wesley, he suggests that the Wesleys' theological emphases, far from being disconnected and unrelated to each other, form instead a unified system of theology. 'Recent thinking on the Wesleys', he declares, 'has emphasized the fact that they had a genuine theology centred on the connected doctrines of original sin, prevenient grace, repentance, justification by faith, assurance, sanctification, perfect love and glorification'. Such a theological emphasis, in Whaling's view, illustrates the fact that spirituality for the Wesleys was not something static but ongoing. Spirituality involved an ongoing process of sanctification, the aim of which was to love God with all one's heart, mind, soul and strength, and to love one's neighbour as oneself. It is not surprising, therefore, that among the selected works of the Wesleys he has included John's 'A Plain Account of Christian Perfection'.

Whaling completes this useful study of the spirituality of the Wesleys by emphasising that it was not solely concerned with 'an individual interiority' but included a social dimension. He describes John Wesley as a great social reformer and provides evidence to support this view.

The book could perhaps be criticised on the grounds that it makes no reference to any faults in the lives of the Wesleys. While it is not purely a biographical study, one might have expected an analysis of their spirituality to include some mention of possible imperfections. These are overlooked and only the best is presented. Regarding the best, Whaling is in no doubt concerning John Wesley's greatest achievement. For him, the genius of Wesley lay in his administrative ability to create an organisation through which spirituality could be channelled. He describes the connectional system of classes, societies, circuits and conference which Wesley established, as a system of 'connected spirituality'.

